Relative to Canada

# PROPOSED MEASURE FOR ADMISSION

OF

# GRAIN,

FROM ALL COUNTRIES INTO

# GREAT BRITAIN,

ADDRESSED TO

## HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON,

BY

JAMES BUCHANAN, Esq.,

HER MAJESTY'S CONSUL AT NEW-YORK.

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In the year eighteen hundred and twenty-two I was induced to publish a pamphlet, developing a plan for throwing open the ports of Great Britain for the importation of grain from all countries. The circumstances of the present day seem to me favorable for a reproduction of this project, which is accordingly set forth in the following pages.

It is unquestionable that the prosperity of agriculture is intimately connected with the stability of British greatness; yet the commercial relations of the kingdom are so immense and important that they demand and must receive their share of legislative attention, even when they come in conflict with the agricultural; and how to reconcile the two, in the face of the extending demand for freedom of trade, is one of the greatest problems for the solution of the political economist. My conviction is that agriculture, commerce and manufactures, may be made to support each other; and that a happy combination of their energies may be devised, by which not only their own prosperity, but that of the nation, may be raised to the highest point. The question is how to accomplish that desirable object. An attempt to answer it in part will be found in the succeeding pages.

The plan set forth by me in eighteen hundred and twenty two, was three-fold in its object.

*First*, to prevent foreign agricultural countries from imposing heavy duties on British manufactures.

*Second*, to make Great Britain an emporium for the deposite of grain in seasons of plenty, in exchange for British manufactures ;* and,

*Third*, by the admission of grain at all times, to do away all motive for that exclusion of British products, which is unquestionably generated by our corn laws; and, at the same time, by imposing the same duties on foreign grain that are imposed by the producing countries on British manufactures, at once to silence all charges of exclusiveness against Great Britain, and hold out an inducement to that liberality of trade which will afford the greatest advantage to both parties.

The idea developed in the second of the objects above specified, originated with the Lord Wallace, by whom I had the honor of being consulted in eighteen hundred and twenty, when he was Vice-President of the Board of Trade, on various interesting and important subjects pertaining to the commercial relations of the kingdom, particularly with Her Majesty's North American possessions.

The third object enumerated, although general in its scope, had particular reference to Canada, which might be made the great farming district for the supply of food for England, to the exceeding profit and advantage of both.

The plan I would suggest is developed in the following propositions.

## FIRST MEASURE.

That wheat, rye, oats and barley shall be admitted into Great Britain and Ireland, from all countries, for home

* See note at the end.

consumption, on the payment of the same duties ad valorem that are levied by those countries upon the manufactures of the United Kingdom.

## OBSERVATIONS.

I would prohibit the importation of flour into Great Britain, for home consumption, in order to retain the manufacture of that article for our own mills. Grain, if properly secured and kept, may be preserved for years; there would be no difficulty, therefore, in making England a great emporium for the deposite of bread stuffs, to which other countries might resort in times of scarcity, while for home consumption the price would seldom vary. Fluctuation in the price of food is seldom or never beneficial to the producer, while to the consumer it is always an injury, causing mischievous fluctuations in the rate of wages. I know it is a received axiom that dear food causes high wages, and vice versa, but my experience has taught me otherwise. I have always found that when food was dear, men were obliged to work at whatever wages they could get; when it was cheap, the necessity of working was less urgent, and workmen being more in demand, wages of course were higher.

## SECOND MEASURE.

That grain, to be ware-housed, shall be admitted from all countries, free of duty. If ground in England, to be exported duty free, subject only to the expense of ware-housing. Such grain if consumed in Great Britain, to pay a duty of one shilling and three pence sterling per bushel.

## OBSERVATIONS.

By this arrangement, an ample and certain supply of flour for Her Majesty's West-India colonies would be secured; while British vessels bound for ports in Brazil and other countries of South America could be loaded wholly or in part with flour, an article always in demand in those countries, and now supplied almost wholly from the United States. The supply of flour to the West-Indies, from England, would relieve those colonies from the constant drain of bullion now setting in from them to the United States, and at the same time give increased employment to British shipping. It is well known that flour, suitable for the West-India and South American markets, cannot be made from British wheat; the supply therefore must come, directly or indirectly, from other countries, and chiefly from the United States. So long as our restrictive system excludes the grain of those countries from England, the supply to our West-India islands and to South America must be directly from the producing countries, to their advantage solely; while by making England a great depot of grain from all countries, the profit of grinding and of conveyance at least, would belong to her, besides collateral benefits of enlarged commerce and increased demand for her manufactures.

## THIRD MEASURE.

That wheat, rye, oats, and barley, shall be admitted from Her Majesty's North-American possessions free of duty, and be exported also free of duty; wheat taken for consumption in England, to pay a duty of three pence per

bushel, rye and barley three half pence per bushel. Oats taken for consumption to be duty free. Wheat, the produce of the United States, imported into Canada, at any point west of Kingston on Lake Ontario, and paying there a duty of eight pence per bushel, to be admitted into England as Canada-wheat. Flour from Canada to be admitted into England at a duty of two shillings per barrel of 196 pounds, without regard to the origin of the wheat from which it is made.

## OBSERVATIONS.

The great advantages of this measure to Her Majesty's Canadian possessions are too obvious to require comment. These possessions are the only parts of Her Majesty's dominions capable, under full cultivation, of supplying the wants of Great Britain; and they afford, also, the most abundant and attractive outlet for the redundant laboring population of the United Kingdom. An extensive natural, not forced, emigration from Britain to Canada would be of infinite service to both, if attended by the proposed system. In Canada there is a prolific soil, requiring only agricultural laborers to make it one of the greatest grain producing countries in the world. England can supply those laborers, and a market for the produce of their toil; while they, in turn, will consume her manufactures to an immense amount. Thus an intercourse, of the highest mutual profit, might be established between them—carried on, too, wholly in British vessels.

The commercial prosperity of Canada is to be established only by completing the navigation of the St. Lawrence

and the Lakes. The proposed duty of eight pence per bushel on United States wheat would assist in providing the interest of the loan for the improvement of the navigation, and would sufficiently protect the Canadian farmer.

It would be better, I admit, that the trade with the United States should be absolutely free through Canada; and I trust that a time will come when so it may be, but at present such freedom is not attainable.

The proposed duty of two shillings per barrel on flour from Canada, is designed for the security of the agricultural interest in the United Kingdom.

Quebec might, with advantage, be erected into an auxiliary depot of grain; for the preservation of which the dryness of the climate is peculiarly favorable.

## FOURTH MEASURE.

That in calculating the duties payable on grain imported from foreign countries, the minimum price shall be taken at one dollar, or four and sixpence sterling, per bushel, for wheat; for barley and rye, two shillings.

## OBSERVATIONS.

The protection of the agricultural interests of Great Britain and Canada requires the establishment of a minimum price on which the duty shall be laid. The principle I have derived from the practice adopted by the government of the United States, in laying duties on the low-priced cottons, and other manufactures of England; and as no people are more urgent for reciprocity, this part of the

proposed measure is in accordance with their policy. What the minimum should be on oats and other grain from the Baltic, I cannot pretend to say, as my ideas are founded upon my knowledge of trade in the United States. The necessity for a minimum is farther shewn by the fact, that in some countries grain can be furnished so cheaply, that duty upon the value, at the place of export, would afford no protection, while these countries are but small consumers of British manufactures.

## FIFTH MEASURE.

That the duties arising from the importation of grain and flour imported into Great Britain shall be applied to the relief of the agricultural interests, and to the promotion of emigration, especially of such persons as form a charge upon the landholders and farmers.

## OBSERVATIONS.

It is very evident, from the increased burden of the poor laws, which by many is charged upon the high price of food, as well as from the overflowing population, that emigration is at once the most humane and the most effectual method of relief to the country. And I would suggest that the removal of females is of more importance than that of males, from considerations that must be obvious, while in Canada females are as much, if not more, wanted, as must always be the case in new countries, the result of spontaneous emigration being a much larger proportion of increase to the male than the female population.

It is clearly both just and wise to employ the means arising from the import of grain in relieving the agricultural interest at home, by diminishing the number of persons to be fed at its expense.

*Note.*—The increased, and increasing, population of the United Kingdom, loudly calls for the providing graineries impervious to atmospheric air—as is the case at Genoa, Odessa, and other places—to be supplied in years of plenty, and to be so capacious as to retain three years' supply, to be erected not only in England but at Quebec, such to be under the direction of Her Majesty's government; proof is not required to show, that even in the way of profit, such would prove beneficial. It is to be observed, that the wheat so imported from the Baltic, &c., has been regarded as much inferior to the United States wheat.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

It must be admitted that to counteract the present active progress in the extension of manufactures in countries heretofore supplied from Great Britain, which are greatly, if not chiefly, improved by British workmen, who, for want of employment at home, have removed to other countries, some efficient and immediate measures must be adopted; yet it is not just that the burden should fall on the agricultural interest alone, which, it was apprehended, would be the effect of Lord John Russell's scheme; and if it is conceded that, to enable British workmen to compete with other countries, daily becoming more formidable rivals, the condition of the British workman must be meliorated, justice demands that other classes than those connected with lands should bear their share of the burden, and this alone can be done, it is apprehended, by a property-tax, as property has improved chiefly from the mercantile and working classes; thus, other property, as well as land, should contribute; in order to provide the working classes with cheap bread, tea, and sugar, others besides the agricultural and colonial proprietors should be called on for their quota of the means.

In order to place the British mechanic upon a par with those in other countries, who must immediately come in competition with him, flour should be had at £1 10*s.* the barrel of 196 lbs., sugar at 5*d.*, and tea at 3*s.* 6*d.* per lb. The revenue arising from these articles at the present rate of

duty may be ascertained. The reduction of revenue to meet the above prices can be accurately ascertained, and such reduction should be replaced by a tax on property graduated on an ascending scale, whether arising from lands, houses, and public or private securities, save investments by foreigners.

The landed interest should bear in mind that their monopoly of provisions, for home consumption, is not touched—a monopoly not subject to the vicissitudes of climate as agriculture—while all who examine the subject will be led to the conclusion, that to render the production of grain in England equally profitable with that of cattle and sheep, bread should be kept at a price far beyond what it bears in any other country, and such price must increase with the population. Limited as lands, profitable for the cultivation of grain, are, the supply of beef, mutton, butter, &c., must be diminished, as the United Kingdom does not increase in acres as in population. This consideration brings to view the vast importance of Canada, which is the only portion of the empire that can furnish the required quantity of grain; when brought into cultivation, and by prudent measures, such cultivation will keep pace so as to afford an ample supply, were the population of the United Kingdom double what it is. But even aside from such important advantages, surely there should not be any restrictive measures to exclude Her Majesty's subjects in Canada from feeling that they are regarded as members of the empire; *the policy that shall cherish such feeling* will alone render them the unconquerable subjects of Her Majesty.

As immediately connected with this subject, I cannot omit even here adverting to a measure, which I have for

above twenty years, on all occasions, advocated, as of more importance to the upholding of British interests on the American continent, than all others which have been urged upon the consideration of Her Majesty's ministers, namely—that the St. Lawrence, and the position of Canada, should be rendered available to the upholding of the power of the crown and interests of the empire on this continent; and I am cheered with the knowledge that your grace has been led to view Her Majesty's North American possessions, particularly Canada, as essential to the sustaining of the British empire. To promote this all-important national object, the navigation of the St. Lawrence, and the navigable communications of the great inland seas, should be regarded as a great national work, and be prosecuted with vigor, not leaving a young colony chargeable with works so essential for the empire. Heavy, indeed, will be the burden, but cheerfully it will be borne by Canada, to make their rail-ways and roads to come in communication with the navigable waters leading to the ocean. Let this noble river, and those inland seas, be regarded as the navigable waters of the empire, and not as private rivers. They are too gigantic for a colony, and I fear not to maintain that they will prove more efficacious than the most powerful works which can be erected by the ordnance department, in preserving peace with the United States. Afford the citizens of that republic all the advantages the proposed measures assuredly yield them, and they must become a changed people before they will sacrifice them. The navigable coast, which may be opened by the measures adverted to, exceeds five thousand miles, while the vast territories of Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana—yes, to the Rocky Mountains—may be drawn above seven hundred miles nearer the Atlantic; but I

deem it unnecessary to do more herein than to bring the subject again to view, being prepared with facts to uphold my statements. It may be out of place here, but as the shipping interests are materially interested in the proposed measures submitted for consideration, I am constrained to advert to the state of the vessels principally engaged in the timber trade to Canada. Those employed in carrying merchandize are much better fitted out, but even some of them are placed under masters, who, by their imperfect seamanship, but especially their want of moral principles, are disgraceful to the British flag; while in connection with the interests of Canada, and the comfort of emigrants proceeding thither, the subject is one of great importance, and to which I have frequently called the attention of the General Ship Owners' Society of London.

That wheat and other grain has been repeatedly imported into the United States from Europe, is not generally known in England: in the year 1837, the following quantities were imported:—

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| Russia, | . . | 46,922 |
| Prussia, | . . | 279,347 |
| Sweden and Norway, | | 10,291 |
| Denmark, | . . | 43,377 |
| Holland, | . . | 453,036 |
| Belgium, | . . | 75,576 |
| England, | . . | 984,334 |
| Scotland, | . . | 7 |
| Br. North America, | | 317,170 |
| Cape of Good-Hope, | | 25 |
| Hanse towns, and other ports of Germany, | | 1,405,783 |
| Mediteranean ports, | | 68,231 |
| French Atlantic Ports, | | 6,149 |
| Italy, | . . | 228,113 |
| Sicily, | . . | 4,961 |
| Triest, and other Adriatic ports, | . . | 212,457—In all, 3,921,295 bushels, valued at $4,154,325 |